Instructor's Notes

Disciplines/Courses: This project can be used in political science courses from introductory American politics course to more advanced courses. The project could also be used in any course that deals with federalism.

Degree of Difficulty: I (Introductory).

Resources/Background Needed: Since this project is introductory no statistical background is required for students. A basic knowledge of federalism maybe helpful for putting the project in a broader context. In terms of software a basic knowledge of any spreadsheet application such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets would also be beneficial

About running group projects: This project could be done on an individual basis or in pairs of students. With any group (including pairs) the danger is one student does all the work and the others pass the buck. To avoid this problem, if this project is done in pairs, the instructor should distribute a survey to each member of the group. The survey should ask the students to evaluate themselves and their partners in how much they contributed to the overall group effort. This survey is for the instructor only to modify the final group project grade, if necessary, to reflect the contributions of each group member.

Open ended questions:

-How were the results different from your expectations? Explain

-What are some of the reasons for the differences that you found?

-What role did ideology and partisanship play in policy innovativeness?

-What role did demographics play in policy innovativeness?

Special instructions and assumptions: Although no statistical background is necessary to complete the project a knowledge of what the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is and how it is calculated may be beneficial for students. The instructor may want to go through the calculation in class to provide the students that background. Additionally, some discussion of how the different correlation levels relate to the "strength" of the relationship may be helpful. For example, telling students that a correlation coefficient of .2 is a weak relationship while a coefficient of .5 is a moderate relationship and a coefficient of .8 is a strong relationship.

Revisions and continuation: There are thousands of variables in the dataset used in this assignment and there are options to create line charts, gifs, and network analysis graphs. In other words, there are an almost limitless options that can be explored for students about the similarities and differences across the 50 states. One example, is to produce simple line graphs showing comparisons between the 50 states (or subsets of states). The State Comparison tab in the dataset allows students to make line charts with up to all 50 states using all of the thousands

of variables in the dataset. One could use the creation of line charts as a precursor to correlation analysis allowing students to visually look for correlations between variables using the line charts and then conduct a correlation analysis with those same variables to see the more precise relationship. Another option is to have students look for correlation among the independent variables (collinearity) to sse which ones should be dropped from the analysis. This might move the assignment from an introductory stage to an intermediate stage and would require more statistical knowledge from the students.